

CLIMATE NEWS

From Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, and Jeff Merkley

DPCC Meeting | January 30, 2014

Higher Tides from Climate Change Expected to Make Hurricane Flooding Worse



High tides have been getting higher and low tides lower at cities around the Gulf of Mexico, according to a new study from University of South Florida (USF) researchers. "The changes ... have almost doubled the risk of hurricane-induced flooding associated with sea level rise since the 1990s for the eastern and northeastern Gulf of Mexico coastlines," the study said. The size of high and low tides naturally vary seasonally. But by turning summers warmer and winters colder, climate change has altered normal tidal variations, particularly in the past two decades. Lower low tides can be good news if that's when a hurricane makes landfall, said USF's Mark Luther. But if a hurricane hits during one of the higher high tides, it could push seawater much farther inland than ever before, he added. In low-lying Florida, where 95 percent of the population lives within 35 miles of its 1,200 miles of coastline, rising seas are already producing major changes. At Waccasassa State Park in Levy County, palm trees have been toppling over dead as saltwater creeps up the beach. And tidal flooding that used to be a rare occurrence in Key West now happens so frequently that some businesses on the city's famed Duval Street have stockpiled sandbags for quick deployment. *(Tampa Bay Times/2013GL058777)*

NOAA: 2013 was 4th Warmest Year Ever Recorded

Last year was the 4th warmest since NOAA began collecting global temperature data in 1880, officials announced last week. It was also the 7th warmest year according to NASA's analysis. The agencies use two different analysis methods that create the variation, but the findings are consistent with each other, officials noted. According to NOAA, the annual global combined land and ocean surface temperature was 58.12°F, 1.12°F warmer than the 20th century average. NASA found that the average temperature was 58.3°F, or 1.1°F warmer than the 20th century mean. The temperature has continued an ongoing uptick in warmth that started in the 1970s, said Tom Karl of NOAA's National Climatic Data Center. And the hottest of those years have all occurred in the past 15 years. "The long-term trends are very clear," said Gavin Schmidt of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. "They're not going to disappear." *(E&E)*

Industry Awakens to Threat of Climate Change

After a decade of global droughts drying up the water needed to produce Coca-Cola's product, the company has embraced climate change as an economically disruptive force. Coke reflects the emerging consensus among U.S. business leaders and mainstream economists that climate change is contributing to lower gross domestic products, higher costs, broken supply chains, and increased financial risk. Nike is also speaking out because of extreme weather disrupting its supply chain. Floods shut down four Nike factories in Thailand in 2008, and the company remains concerned about rising droughts in regions that produce the cotton used in Nike clothes. Both Nike and Coke are responding internally: Coke uses water-conservation technologies and Nike is using more synthetic material that is less dependent on weather conditions. The companies have also lobbied governments to enact environmentally friendly policies. "Increased droughts, more unpredictable variability, 100-year floods every two years," said Jeffrey Seabright, Coke's VP for environment and water resources, listing the problems that he said were also disrupting the company's supply of sugar cane and sugar beets, as well as citrus for its fruit juices. "When we look at our most essential ingredients, we see those events as threats." *(New York Times)*

EU Calls for 40% Reduction in GHG Output by 2030

The European Union (EU) has proposed cutting the region's greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions by 40 percent in 2030, accelerating its efforts to fight climate change. The European Commission's strategy to reduce pollution, curb rising energy costs, and overhaul renewable-energy policies in the next decade would require an average annual investment of 38 billion euros (\$52 billion) in the 28-nation bloc. This spending will be to a large extent compensated by fuel savings, according to commission president Jose Manuel Barroso. "We show that European leadership in global climate action is beyond doubt and we show that we can do that in a way that is beneficial for economy," said Barroso. "What we're proposing today is ambitious and affordable." The strategy is the start of a debate among member states, which may lead to a draft law in early 2015. It also includes an EU-wide target to boost the share of renewables in energy consumption to 27 percent by 2030 and may include a pledge to boost energy efficiency later this year, the commission said. The EU's long-term goal is to cut greenhouse gases by at least 80 percent in 2050. *(Bloomberg)*